

Metropolitan Jacksonville Area HIV Health Services Planning Council

Council News and Updates

February 2022

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NEW FACES: GET TO KNOW A MEMBER

By Dan Merkan, Member, Continuum of Care Coordination Committee Chair

I grew up in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri and lived in the same house the first 17 years of my life. I then went to Kirksville, Missouri to attend what is now called Truman State University. This is where I earned BAs in English and Psychology. After graduation, I moved to Kansas City, Missouri and took a job with the Division of Social Services. I quickly transferred into the Department of Mental Health where I remained for almost 6 years. During my time in the Department, I performed clinical casework. This work included providing outpatient case management for people with severe mental illness, taking calls on the nightshift on Western Missouri's suicide and crisis hotline, assisting with psychiatric emergency room assessments of people in crisis, providing inpatient to outpatient linkage, and finally, working in a crisis respite home for persons with mental illness. While I was working full-time, I also earned an MA in Mental Health Counseling with a clinical emphasis through the University of Missouri—Kansas City. It was during this time in Kansas City that my interests in LGBT and HIV advocacy developed.

As a counseling student, I found that many of my counseling clients were LGBT and at least one was living with HIV. Many were experiencing distress because of how society and their families were treating them because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status. Additionally, while at work in the Department of Mental Health, I had a co-worker who was in a long-term relationship with his male partner who was living with HIV. My coworker's partner's health began to rapidly decline in 1997. He was unable to tolerate the new combination drug treatments which had just become available in 1996. As my coworker's partner's health declined it exacerbated his own mental health issues. He was taking off time from work to support his partner to attend his medical appointments. They were not married because at the time it was not legally allowed. My coworker's partner eventually died at the age 36, and because their relationship was not legally recognized, the Department of Mental Health would not grant my co-worker time off to deal with his partner's death. This denial was an act that outraged me and many of my coworkers. This was one of many experiences that led me to want to do more to help the LGBT community, and people living with HIV, so that more people would not have these types of discriminatory experiences. It was one of the many reasons I was excited to take a job at JASMYN in Jacksonville.

I have been with JASMYN for the past 23 years. In my time at JASMYN, I have held many roles related to HIV and HIV Prevention. I implemented multiple HIV prevention programs, performed HIV counseling and testing, oversaw federal, state, and private foundation HIV prevention grants, evaluated programs, and more. One area I have continually been involved with is HIV planning. I currently serve on the Florida Comprehensive Planning Network (FCPN) as the Behavioral Science At-Large Representative. I have been in this role for many years and

prior to being in this role I represented Area 4 on this body. This planning body advises the State of Florida on the creation and implementation of its Comprehensive HIV Plan. I have also been a member of the First Coast Community AIDS Prevention Partnership (FCCAPP) for two decades. This partnership helps bring components of our local HIV prevention plan to fruition by holding events and sharing critical information among its members. I also have chaired the Jacksonville Coalition for Equality since 2014. The coalition has worked to ensure our city protects people from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and it was one of the driving forces that led our city to update its Human Rights Ordinance. I also act as JASMYN’s liaison with law enforcement. I regularly communicate with the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, local FBI, and Department of Homeland Security to keep informed of threats and share information about incidents occurring in our LGBT community.

I value creating systems of care that provide high quality services free from discrimination and work toward that end. It is one of the reasons I enjoy being a part of the Planning Council and have spent time chairing the Continuum of Care Coordination Committee the past three years. I believe by having a strong, inclusive, and thoughtful comprehensive plan we can have an incredible impact on preventing new HIV transmissions and improve the quality of life for those living with HIV.

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Get to know other Planning Council members featured in our past newsletters:
<https://www.coj.net/departments/parks-and-recreation/social-services/ryan-white-c-a-r-e-act,-part-a/planning-council>.



SAVE THE DATE: MONTHLY CALENDAR – FEBRUARY 2022

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1	2	3 Bylaws Committee 1809 Art Museum Dr 2 - 4 pm	4
7	8 Needs Assessment Ad-hoc Location TBD 2 - 4 pm	9 Membership Committee 1809 Art Museum Dr 2 - 4 pm	10 Community Connections 515 W 6th St 12 - 1 pm CCC Committee* Willow Branch Library 2875 Park St 2 - 4 pm	11
14	15 Executive Committee 1809 Art Museum Dr 2 - 4 pm	16	17	18
21	22	23	24 Planning Council UF Towers Charter Room 580 8th St W 3 - 5 pm	25
28				

**CCC = Continuum of Care Coordination*

HOW TO ATTEND PLANNING COUNCIL MEETINGS

Members of the public are welcome to attend all Council and Committee meetings. The current options for attending include:

- Physically Present: Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings in person. Due to COVID 19 distancing guidelines, meetings are taking place in several locations and masks are strongly encouraged.
- Electronically: At this time, the option for guests to attend electronically via Zoom is only available for Planning Council meetings and not Committee meetings.
- For more information, contact PlanningCouncil@coj.net or 904-255-3346.

MEETING MINUTES

See what we've been up to! Read our meeting minutes here:

<https://www.coj.net/departments/parks-and-recreation/social-services/ryan-white-c-a-r-e-act,-part-a/planning-council/about-us#MEETING%20MINUTES>

PARTNER ANNOUNCEMENTS

The City of Jacksonville does not endorse any of the following events.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Beyond the Walls: Building Bridges for Post-Release Linkages to Care & Community (Virtual)

February 10, 2022 12 – 1 p.m.

Register:

https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0087-0004-229886b08c6747e2a21872e3d57f79f4

Motivational Interviewing (Virtual)

February 11, 2022 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Register: <https://www.maaetc.org/events/view/19737>

Pain Management in Individuals with HIV: Challenges and Opportunities (Virtual)

February 14, 2022 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

Register: <https://www.neaetc.org/events/view/19713>

Making the Case with Data: Epidemiologic Snapshots, Resource Inventories, and Needs Assessments (Virtual)

February 17, 2022 3 – 4 p.m.

Register:

https://jsi.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0v4ZwEqQRQis8CdikiblfQ

Mental Health and HIV (Virtual)

February 23, 2022 12 – 1 p.m.

Register: <https://www.neaetc.org/events/view/19828>

Peer Learning Session: Making the Case with Data: Epidemiologic Snapshots, Resource Inventories, and Needs Assessments (Virtual)

February 24, 2022 2 – 3 p.m.

Register:

https://jsi.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJltdeCtpjkiHNXUSdzbB3Xii_dkFVNh2w74

February HAB You Heard Webinar

February 24, 2022 3 – 4 p.m.

Register: <https://hrsa->

[gov.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_PUCZiQHHTF-J90k6dOrvzw](https://hrsa.gov.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_PUCZiQHHTF-J90k6dOrvzw)

Save the Date:

National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment

August 23 – 26, 2022

More info: <https://ryanwhiteconference.hrsa.gov/>

ONGOING EVENTS:

COVID-19 Vaccine and Testing Locations in Jacksonville

Click here: <http://duval.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/infectious-disease-services/COVID-19/index.html>

Additional Info on COVID-19 Vaccines and People with HIV:

<https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/staying-in-hiv-care/other-related-health-issues/coronavirus-covid-19>

Positive Attitudes HIV/AIDS Support Group

Every Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Christ Church of Peace

1240 McDuff Ave S, Jacksonville, FL 32205

For more information please contact posatt123@aol.com.

Beacons of Hope HIV Support Group at Lutheran Social Services

Every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month 3 – 5 p.m.

4615 Philips Highway Jacksonville, FL 32207

Refreshments will be provided. For more information please contact James Perrigan at 904-739-7015.

UF CARES Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Every 3rd Tuesday of each month 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. via Zoom

Email michael.kyger@jax.ufl.edu or call 904-244-5466 for more information.

HIVCareNow Testing and Events Calendar

<http://hivcarenow.com/calendar/testing-calendar.html>

New FDOH HIV 101 Video

<https://vimeo.com/651650169/db56daaa5a>

The Planning Council is a legislatively mandated group of diverse community members who work to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of HIV/AIDS health services. The Planning Council members participate in processes including identifying community needs, assessing the capacity to meet those needs, and allocating Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) resources.

We are always looking for new members! Members go through a rigorous interview process and are appointed by the Mayor of the City of Jacksonville to represent a particular demographic.

For more information, please contact the Planning Council Support Staff at PlanningCouncil@coj.net or 904-255-3346.

For more information about the RWHAP, please visit <https://hab.hrsa.gov>.

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